



United States Department of the Interior
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

Great Sand Dunes National Park and Preserve
11500 Highway 150
Mosca, Colorado 81146-9798
Phone 719-378-6300 Fax 719-378-6310



Frequently Asked Questions – FAQ's

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1. How much does it cost?

Nothing! The only cost to you is your time. A \$50 deposit will be required to hold your spot once accepted, but that will be refunded in full upon completion of the program. If the \$50 deposit poses a financial hardship for you, please contact the Education Specialist for alternatives.

2. How will I get to the park?

You will need to arrange your own transportation to and from the park. If you are having trouble finding a ride, or you would like to volunteer to participate in a carpool, please contact the Education Specialist.

3. What do I need to bring?

Group gear and some personal gear are supplied by the Ambassadors program. The Gear List is available online and should be followed closely. If you are having trouble acquiring some of the items on the gear list, let us know and we'll do our best to find you some loaners.

4. When are the sessions?

Dates vary from year to year. Check this year's application form and website for current dates.

Please note your session preferences on your application. We will try to accommodate you as best we can, but we cannot guarantee. Please be flexible.



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5. What if I can't go on one of the trips? Can I switch dates?

We will try to accommodate your preferences on trip dates but because of group size limitations, we may not be able to switch.

6. Can I invite friends and family?

Parents, family members, and friends are invited to attend the awards ceremony and party held on the last day of each session. This is a great opportunity to celebrate the accomplishments of each member! The overnight sessions, however, are open only to enrolled Ambassadors.

7. Is it dangerous? Will I be eaten by a bear?

The most dangerous part of the Ambassadors for Wilderness program will be your drive to and from the park. Risk management will be an integral part of our curriculum, minimizing the hazards of wilderness travel. Pay attention to the instructors and use your own common sense and you'll be fine.

8. What if I get hurt?

Signing the Agreement for Individual Voluntary Services entitles you to medical coverage under the Office of Workers Compensation. Any illness or injury you receive *while working within the bounds of your volunteer agreement* would be fully covered. Your emergency contacts will be called and you will be taken to the nearest medical care facility.

9. Who else will be in my group?

Participants will be recruited from all over the San Luis Valley and surrounding areas. Selection is based on enthusiasm and leadership qualities, not academic performance. You may already know some of your fellow Ambassadors or you may be the sole representative from your school. Junior high school participants will be going into 8th and 9th grade. High school participants will be going into 10th, 11th, and 12th grade.

10. What will we do?

Everything! We will be studying some of the special resources of the Great Sand Dunes, doing some field science with park staff, helping to maintain trails, or maybe teaching younger visitors about the park. All the while, we'll be learning outdoor skills, making new friends, exploring a spectacular landscape, and having a ball!

11. What will we eat?

Because traveling in wilderness requires you to carry your food on your back, you may at first be unfamiliar with some of the menu choices. Food will be lightweight, non-perishable, easily packable, and *delicious!* Dietary restrictions and allergies can be easily accommodated. Please indicate them on the health questionnaire or direct questions to the Education Specialist.



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12. How much will we be hiking?

We'll be hiking an average of about 5 miles each day – sometimes up to 8 miles, sometimes as few as 3 miles. For some participants, the hiking will be a physical challenge. For others, the challenge will be keeping a slower pace than they would if travelling solo.

13. What do I need to do to carry out my “ambassadorial” duties?

The AFW Film Festival in August is your chance to tell your story in your own words. Create a video, write a song or story, set a slideshow to music, or create an art project. You will be able to consult with your Great Sand Dunes instructors and to find the right kind of project for you. There may also be opportunities throughout the school year to stay involved with the outdoors and wilderness environments.

14. Can I get community service credit for this?

Yes! Junior high school students will receive a certificate verifying 40 hours of volunteer service. High school students will receive 56 hours of volunteer service credit. Ask any school counselor about college applications and they'll all agree – demonstrating active volunteerism is a huge plus!

15. Will I get paid for this?

You'll go home with some swag, but this is a purely volunteer and educational experience. However, if you complete your session *and* participate in the Film Festival, you will receive a super fabulous piece of outdoor equipment.

16. Can I get a job out of this?

Alumni of the Ambassadors for Wilderness program are eligible to apply to be Student Instructors with the program for a small daily stipend. Alumni who are enrolled in college are eligible to apply for paid positions as summer rangers at Great Sand Dunes. Ask around and you will find that most federal land employees got their feet in the door through a volunteer experience like this one. On our last day we will go over basic career counseling and how to get jobs with agencies like the National Park Service.